"Truth Is One, Men Call It By Various Names." —RIG VEDA

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Message of the East

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Man and His Fate

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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of
Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*
"Light shall come again from the East."

VOL. XXXIX 1950 NUMBER 2

THE CUP

By Swami Vivekananda

This is your cup—the cup assigned to you from
the beginning.
Nay, My child, I know how much of that dark drink
is your own brew
Of fault and passion, ages long ago,
In the deep years of yesterday, I know.

This is your road—a painful road and drear.
I made the stones that never give you rest.
I set your friend in pleasant ways and clear,
And he shall come like you, unto My breast.
But you, My child, must travel here.

This is your task. It has no joy or grace,
But it is not meant for any other hand,
And in My universe hath measured place.
Take it. I do not bid you understand.
I bid you close your eyes to see My face.

The true aim of life should be illumination, the true morality the practice of justice, the true redemption should be the liberation of the soul from error and its union with God through consciousness. —*Giordano Bruno.*

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

All that we are is the result of what we have thought. it is founded on our thoughts and made up of our thoughts. If a man speak or act with a good thought, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.

—*Dhammapada.*

It is God alone who does everything. You may say that in that case man may commit sin. But that is not true. If a man is firmly convinced that God alone is the Doer and that he himself is nothing, then he will never make a false step. —*Sri Ramakrishna.*

And some men climb the high way, and some men grope below.
And in between, on the misty flats, the rest drift to and fro.
And to every man there openeth a High Way and a Low,
And every man decideth which way his soul shall go.

—*John Oxenham.*

Habit is a cable; we weave a thread of it every day, and at last we cannot break it. —*Horace Mann.*

We must contrive to live together in peace, even at the cost of great material sacrifice; the alternative is the death of our society. As we approach what may be the last hour before midnight, the challenge is plain before us. What will be our response?

—*Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists.*

Determine that the thing can and shall be done, and then we shall find the way. —*Lincoln.*

Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls.

—*Chopin.*

MAN AND HIS FATE

By Swami Paramananda

(An Address delivered by the Swami in the Temple of the Universal Spirit, Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, California, November 20, 1932.)

In this hour of silence and prayer, let us lift our thoughts and feelings to the Supreme Being, according to our inner convictions.

Let us be still, so that all our faculties may be united, and there may be no discordant note within us or without us.

May our vision unfold, and may we feel in our heart the Presence of the Infinite One—Source of our life and existence —and ever seek our guidance from Him and Him alone!

May the All-beneficent Spirit surround us and shield us with His protecting love; and keep us ever and ever in peace!

Peace, peace, peace be unto us and to all living beings!

A prayer when it is sincerely uttered, apart from all other considerations, has the same effect upon us as has beautiful music upon the mind. Yet there are some who do not obtain the true benefit of prayer, who are prejudiced against it.

I remember an incident connected with a gentleman who presided at a meeting in Kansas City where I spoke some years ago. The audience was very enthusiastic, deeply appreciative; but this gentleman took a different attitude. He said that he could not comprehend how anyone with Swami's understanding could waste time on prayer. This man was a student of philosophy, but he studied it solely from the intellectual standpoint, and this rather deprived him of the more delicate aspects of spiritual teaching.

Now some of you may not wholly grasp the significance of prayer or be aware of the beauty and blessing it is capable of bestowing. Therefore I am asking you to regard it from the point of view of art. For here is something, as I have

said, that has power to lift the mind away from terrestrial disturbance, in the same way that music, floating to us with its beauty, causes us to forget our troubles.

"Every right action and true thought sets the seal of its beauty on a person and on his face." Of course the opposite kind of action produces the opposite effect. It also sets its seal upon the individual. And this leads me to the subject that I wish to consider with you this morning: "Man and His Fate."

In the first place, what is fate? Some people believe in it and some people do not. It all depends upon the individual interpretation. In one sense, the sense of chance, there is no such thing as fate; but in another sense, that of the fulfillment of law, there is. At no time can we obtain right by doing wrong; but by doing right, we may wipe out the wrong conditions of ages.

Let me begin with the concept of *Karma,* which is handed down to us from India—the concept that a man does not suffer without reason, and without reason does not reap good, although he may not always be able to find the reason in his immediate life.

It may not please you to accept this as a working hypothesis. It may seem to you to present a discouraging picture. "You do not give solace," you may say. Truth gives us strength, and we must never forget that though our wrong actions may have brought suffering to us as "the direct fruits born of the tree of life," if we reverse the order of our thinking and doing, that same tree will give us of its bounty. Therefore if life today hangs over us with weight, misgiving and unhappiness, this does not mean that we should settle down in grief. On the contrary, there lies before us a definite course, just as logical as anything could possibly be, following which we may counteract our misfortunes.

There are many illustrations of the way human destiny can be altered. One look, one touch from Christ, the Redeemer, was often sufficient to raise a man into a new consciousness for eternity. Yet even the Christ power did not work through accident. Out of multitudes of people why did He choose certain ones for His disciples? Think it over.

There is a reason for everything. Nothing happens through chance. You may say: "Why, then, do we see good people suffer?" If you find really good people suffering and there is no reason to think that they deserve it, you can be sure of one thing—they will take that suffering and transmute it into strength, endurance and nobility of character. If they are really good, you will not find them complaining; if they complain, it shows that they lack understanding.

Do not take a superficial attitude. Life has wonderful opportunities for us, and we can avail ourselves of them once our understanding is unfolded. "A house may be dark, but it is not the fault of the sun. A soul may be dark, but it is not because the light of the world does not shed its beams abroad."

Many people feel dismayed because of the seeming injustices in life. They feel that it is unfair that they are unable to accomplish their purpose because of the unexpected and unforeseen obstacles life places across their path—because of the weight life throws upon them. They are bewildered by the chaos and disorder. "I don't believe in anything!" they say. "There can be no justice, or why should a little child suffer?" Again, when they see a child manifesting great genius, they cannot comprehend why another child in the same family should have none. Yet logic shows that there is a background for both of these children. There is a background for every thing and every one.

The past is a portion of our present life and our present

life is going to be a portion of our future, which will be moulded by what we are thinking and doing today. It will be the sum total of our present thoughts and deeds. William James gave a great deal of thought along this particular line. Let me share with you something from his writings:

"We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or vice leaves its never-so-little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, "I won't count this time!" Well, he may not count it, and a kind heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibres the molecules are counting it and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work.

"Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be. If he keep faithfully busy each hour of the working day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can with perfect certainty count on waking up some fine morning to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation in whatever pursuit he may have singled out. Silently, between all the details of business, the power of judging in all that class of matter will have built itself up within him as a possession that will never pass away."

Here he lays emphasis on the idea that whatever we do cannot be wiped out. A finite action can, however, be balanced by an opposite course of action. Perhaps someone who

takes his stand on purely dogmatic grounds, may say: "Everything happens according to Divine judgment." If we believe that there is a higher Power which manifests throughout creation, we must believe that there is a reason for Its manifestation. If the Infinite Deity moulds our destiny we must admit that we offer Him the clay with which to mould it. Our thoughts, our deeds, our aspirations—everything that we do openly or otherwise—will furnish the substance out of which our destiny is made. There is no way that we can hide these factors from the knowledge of the Great Law.

We are very anxious to place the blame upon Divine Providence, but it is we ourselves who lay the foundation for what we like to call our fate. In India this truth is ingrained in the consciousness of the race. You may think that it is not good for people to know that it is by their own fault that they suffer. But why is it not good? If we know wherein we have done wrong, we can always right the wrong. If we do not know, we may quarrel with the universe. But whether we quarrel or not, the course of the Great Law does not change.

Man has the power to make and unmake. Whatever we think, finally we do, in small ways or big. There are, however, impediments. Conceiving high ideals does not mean that we can put them at once into operation. Even the ordinary ventures of men take a long time to set in motion. We have our past to account for first; not only the past of this life, but of the lives we have lived before. This should not make us despondent. On the contrary, it gives us the assurance that life is not just chance: life is a matter of eternity.

Crime in this world would be minimized if the major portion of humanity were concerned with this concept instead of confining itself to one little span of existence. Such a narrow, limited viewpoint is a direct check on our advancement.

When we think in this way our entire life becomes suffocating to us and we do wrong without being aware of it. We say: "Let us make the most of whatever time we have left to us." Shakespeare has brought this out in his plays.

Sometimes we go to an astrologer to discover what promises he holds out for us for the future. That would be good if we went in a scientific spirit in order to find out the indications, so as to act wisely in accordance with them. For instance, if the astrologer tells us that on a certain day we should be especially careful, the spiritual way to meet this would be to make that day a day of inner retirement, and spend it in study and meditation. There may be predictions for today, tomorrow, next year and for the years to come. Is that any reason for us to remain standing still, waiting for these things to take place? Rather we can immediately set in motion counteracting forces. If we do not, we shall have neglected our opportunities. As a matter of fact, man is always changing his fate.

I regret that in some of these matters India has been misunderstood by the people of the West. The Occidental world, for example, has come to think that *Karma* means doom. *Karma* does not signify doom. India has never looked upon it in that light. It means that nothing happens by chance. Man is not a creature of circumstance, for it is in his power to undo things that through misguided zeal he has done ill.

"Impelled by the inspiration of a flame—life—all creatures reap in this world the fruits of their acts. Indeed all creatures live according to the inspiration of the flame." This is from the Indian epic, the "Mahabharata."

Even our hidden acts fall under the sway of this Law. We see this in the world around us, but actually we do not believe it. We think that somehow we are going to be an exception and do wrong without having to pay for it. One of the great lessons we learn through understanding how the

Law operates, is that evil never pays. It will always bear its fruits, though the smaller mistakes may often be counteracted fairly easily. Therefore it is better to put on an armor of good thought. That is how we alter our destiny. Even under affliction let a man understand this Law and never be weary of doing good. Those who do not render service to others make no progress, remain where they are, or else fall backwards.

Understanding is a stepping-stone by which we rise ever higher and higher toward the glory of life. If we have understanding in the heart, we cannot help but perceive the seeds born of our thoughts and actions. What a change it would bring in human consciousness if when we are afflicted or hurt, instead of fighting or striking back, we took another attitude altogether.

In India you find many who though poor and unlettered are able to grasp these great fundamental principles. They may not know how to quote from scriptures, but they do know that if they are miserable, it is by their own fault, and it is in their power to overcome that fault. But do not think that this is peculiar to India alone. It is the same thing that Christ taught, that we find both in the Old Testament and in the New. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." And far, far back in the "Laws of Manu" we read: "Thou canst not gather where thou dost not sow: as thou dost plant the tree, so will it grow!" In other words, you cannot plant an apple tree and have a mango.

This means that we are constantly sowing seeds in the field of life, whether consciously or unconsciously. When a man strikes a discordant note of hate, fear or anger, he may be able to hide it. Some people are so clever that they can conceal outwardly what they feel within, but they never

can conceal it from themselves. If it were not so, how is it that when a man has done wrong, although he is the only one who knows it and the law has not found him out, yet he suffers? He suffers to such an extent that often he is forced to go and make a confession. There are no angels keeping records: they do not need to bother to do that; *we* keep them. Every time we strike a discord, though we may give an excuse, in our own hearts we feel that we have lowered ourselves, and this tends to break down our entire moral fibre; mentally it breaks and physically it breaks, and we suffer the results. There is no man, woman or child strong enough to prevent this.

We must choose the right course, for there can be no expansion in our soul until we learn to move with the greater rhythm. Then life rolls forward with a new significance. Suppose you are the most miserable of all creatures; suppose you take it for granted that nobody understands how miserable you are. Even so, I am inclined to say that you have just as much opportunity to overcome your ills as has anyone else. The greater the difficulty, the more determined we should be. It is not a question of tears or of struggling: everything depends upon right understanding.

There is a magnificent thought given in the Bhagavad-Gita, where Sri Krishna, the Lord, tells his disciple Arjuna, that wisdom, like a blazing fire, burns all actions and reactions, all evil and imperfection, to ashes. Does it not give you impetus to know that if you succeed in kindling that fire within you, no matter how evil you may have been, you can start your life afresh with a new inspiration?

A strange thing, was it not, that Christ did not choose the learned men to be His disciples! They were too self-important. Rather He chose fishermen and others in a lowly walk of life. And these men when they came in His presence

were touched as by the philosopher's stone—touched and transformed. I do believe that when one comes in contact with an embodiment of supreme bliss, one's life is changed, even one's destiny. It is said in India of those who take up the consecrated life, the mendicants (those who renounce all worldly things—name, fame and fortune—and dedicate themselves on the altar of God and of humanity), it is said of them that their destiny is completely altered.

Where there is true consecration, anything is possible unto man. You are bound because you hold yourself bound. Your mind binds you and your mind emancipates you. As soon as you free yourself from self-interest, you will be reborn into a new world. Every time you forget yourself and do something for others, every time your unselfishness causes you to rise to great heights, these occasions, or even the sweet remembrance of them, brings you inspiration and upliftment.

I put these things before you in a simple way, because big-sounding philosophical names and technical terms are apt to confuse. The fact remains that none of us is outside the range of these great opportunities. There are always the time and the occasion for right thought and right action; and our contact with the world is capable of earning for us great happiness or the reverse. We may try to hide these things under a bushel, but they are living facts. There is no one so clever as to be able to earn the blessings of life by harming others. If we do harm, we must be ready to suffer harm. The result may not be immediately apparent, a person may do many wrong things, and not seem to suffer, he may even appear to be jubilant; but my answer to that is, that owing to the density of his nature, the reaction comes more slowly. Fine people suffer at once. People who are noble and spiritually inclined suffer more acutely and far more quickly than do those who are dense and unfeeling. Thus the finer

type are far ahead. They are getting the payment over with while the others are still waiting. The time will come, however, for every man, when the debt will fall due and the account will have to be rendered.

We want to be emancipated; yet we find it difficult continually to stop and weigh our actions in the balance. But it is not by constantly wondering, "Have I done the right thing?" that we gain our freedom. We can so regulate our life that we shall move in rhythm, and then all our thoughts and actions will be in accord with our higher aspirations, and then even without thinking, we shall do what is right. There are people who have come to this state of being. I know there are those who are incapable, physically and mentally, of doing harm to another, of bringing hateful thought to another.

There will come a time when we shall understand the significance of the teaching that it is noble to love one's enemies—not only for the sake of charity, but because it is the only logical means to preserve oneself and free oneself from bondage. Once we have a taste of this kind of thought and action, we cannot follow any other.

What we call destiny—our life and everything that comes to us in life—falls under the sway of this great Law of Compensation or *Karma,* and can be explained by it. As soon as the world realizes that a man cannot do one thing and reap another, there will be established a new order of society. Instead of police force, prison-houses, jails and jailors, we shall have a great commonwealth of emancipated souls. It may sound like a dream, but it will be reality for those who are progressive, cultured and truly free. Is it not a shame to call ourselves free when we are bound by so many fetters!

There will come a time when humanity will do a thing for the sake of itself and for the sake of good. Unfortunately

the majority of men today are intoxicated with ambition and can think of nothing but self-interest; but also there are others so intoxicated with the idea of serving that they will lay down their life for it. The only way to free ourselves and help humanity is to bring these constructive thoughts into the world of life.

When anyone comes in distress and blames his fate or blames others for the wrong he has suffered, perhaps you can give him the solution, can hold before him a light that will show that it does not pay to be so complaining and fault-finding, and that within himself he has the power to adjust everything and restore the peace of his soul. Our mistakes can be wiped out from our consciousness provided we do not do what we know to be wrong. You may say that sometimes we do wrong unconsciously. This is my answer: If consciously we adjust our life to a right rhythm, we shall be incapable of doing wrong unconsciously. In time our whole life will flow in harmony and we shall know the peace and the blessing which come as the result.

No one can experiment with the great Laws of life, but one can move with them. We may not be able to control the mind of a child, but we can control our own mind, we can operate our thought and action as we choose. That is how we alter our entire outlook and our destiny along with it. I believe that every one of us can change what we call our fate—for tomorrow, the day after, and the years to come.

Try to understand the principle that there is no one who can rob or cheat or hurt you but yourself. Learn to take as an experience whatever comes to you. Great men do so. They accept their losses with a smile. The Hindu epic, Mahabharata, tells us that sometimes a man renounces fortune, and sometimes fortune renounces the man. Let us not make too much of passing, insignificant things. Let us not sit upon

the ruins of yesterday and wail and weep and feel so desolate. Often the suffering of the past brings us the sunshine of the present and helps us to build a better future. The roughest road may help us to appreciate the loftier things of existence.

There is no load placed upon us that we are not given adequate strength to carry. The thing is to cease complaining and from finding fault with God and man. Many blame God for their miseries. But Shakespeare said: "The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars but in ourselves that we are underlings!" Whoever understands this law of life, and takes a manly attitude can overcome every difficulty. He may not achieve his victory in a day, but there is always tomorrow and another tomorrow, and still another.

At the very beginning, in the opening prayer, I gave you the picture of Eternity—of vast, unbounded life. Do not limit your time to a limited period; do not limit your mind to a limited sphere. Look to a bigger life; and believe this one, great thing, that the Soul within man is ever free. Let me give you one, last thought: Gold is put in the fire, not to destroy it, but in order to fashion it into a new shape and make it more beautiful. Even so, the gold of our life is put through the ordeal of fire in order that all the dross may be burned away, and the life itself be moulded into a new and more lovely shape by the hand of the supreme Artist; and no matter how fiercely that fire may burn, soul never is destroyed. Remember that, when you are harrassed. It will bring unfailing strength and consolation.

The night kisses the fading day, whispering to his ear: "I am death, your mother. I am to give you fresh birth."

—*From "Stray Birds" by Rabindranath Tagore.*

SUNSET WINE

By Claribel Weeks Avery

(This poem was written by one facing death from an incurable disease. We give it here as a tribute to her unconquerable faith and courage, and in memory of Sister Shanta who passed out of this life on July 16, 1950, under similar circumstances, and who carried her white plume equally high.)

Angels and lucky stars,
Sure guides from height to height,
Wild days that break the eastern bars
And dance across, tonight

Bear witness to my song:
I shaped a bowl of clay
And filled it, as I passed along,
From streams that ran my way.

Bitter and sweet I learned
To love alike, as mine,
And now the sunset glow has turned
Them both to rosy wine.

Whatever calm or strife
Lie hid behind the hill,
I, for this glorious draught of life,
Must be God's debtor still.

You will find something far greater in the woods than you will find in books. Stones and trees will teach you that which you will never learn from masters. —*St. Bernard.*

A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

By Swami Vivekananda

(Condensed from "The Ideal of a Universal Religion.")

Wheresoever our senses reach, or whatsoever our minds imagine, we find therein the action and reaction of two forces, the one counteracting the other and causing the constant play of the mixed phenomena that we see around us, and of those which we feel in our minds. In the external world, the action of these opposite forces is expressing itself as attraction and repulsion, or as centripetal and centrifugal forces; and in the internal, as love and hatred, good and evil. We repel some things, we attract others. We are attracted by one, we are repelled by another. . . . This is patent to all, and the higher the field of action, the more potent, the more remarkable are the influences of these opposite forces.

Religion is the highest plane of human thought and life, and herein we find that the workings of these two forces have been most marked. The intensest love that humanity has ever known has come from religion, and the most diabolical hatred that humanity has known has also come from religion. The noblest words of peace that the world has ever heard have come from men on the religious plane, and the bitterest denunciation that the world has ever known has been uttered by religious men. The higher the object of any religion and the finer its organization, the more remarkable are its activities.

No other human motive has deluged the world with blood so much as religion; at the same time, nothing has brought into existence so many hospitals and asylums for the poor; no other human influence has taken such care, not only of humanity, but also of the lowest of animals, as religion has done. Nothing makes us so cruel as religion, and nothing

makes us so tender as religion. This has been so in the past, and will also, in all probability, be so in the future.

Yet out of the midst of this din and turmoil, this strife and struggle, this hatred and jealousy of religions and sects, there have arisen, from time to time, potent voices, drowning all this noise—making themselves heard from pole to pole, as it were—proclaiming peace and harmony. Will it ever come? Is it possible that there should ever reign unbroken harmony in this plane of mighty religious struggle? . . .

I would ask you for the time being to come out of the network of words; we have all been hearing from childhood of such things as love, peace, charity, equality, and universal brotherhood; but they have become to us mere words without meaning, words which we repeat like parrots, and it has become quite natural for us to do so. We cannot help it. Great souls who first felt these great ideas in their hearts, manufactured these words; and at that time many understood their meaning. Later on, ignorant people have taken up those words to play with them, and made religion a mere play upon words, and not a thing to be carried into practice. It becomes "my father's religion," "our nation's religion," "our country's religion," and so forth. It becomes only a phase of patriotism to profess any religion, and patriotism is always partial. To bring harmony into religion must always be difficult. Yet we will consider this problem of the harmony of religions.

We see that in every religion there are three parts. I mean, in every great and recognized religion. First, there is the philosophy, which presents the whole scope of that religion, setting forth its basic principles, the goal, and the means of reaching it. The second part is mythology, which is philosophy made concrete. It consists of legends relating to the lives of men, or of supernatural beings, and so forth.

It is the abstractions of philosophy concretized in the more or less imaginary lives of men and supernatural beings. The third part is the ritual. This is still more concrete, and is made up of forms and ceremonies, various physical attitudes, flowers and incense, and many other things that appeal to the senses. In these consists the ritual. You will find that all recognized religions have these three elements. Some lay more stress on one, some on another.

Let us now take into consideration the first part, philosophy. Is there one universal philosophy? Not yet. Each religion brings out its own doctrines, and insists upon their being the only true ones. And not only does it do that, but it thinks that he who does not believe in them must go to some horrible place. Some will even draw the sword to compel others to believe as they do. This is not through wickedness, but through a particular disease of the human brain called fanaticism. They are very sincere, these fanatics, the most sincere of human beings; but they are quite as irresponsible as other lunatics in the world. This disease of fanaticism is one of the most dangerous of all diseases. All the wickedness of human nature is roused by it. Anger is stirred up, nerves are strung high, and human beings become like tigers.

Is there any mythological similarity, is there any mythological harmony, any universal mythology accepted by all religions? Certainly not. All religions have their own mythology, only each of them says, "My stories are not mere myths." . . . Nobody in the world, as far as I have seen, is able to make out the fine distinction between history and mythology as it exists in the brains of these persons. All such stories, to whatever religion they may belong, are really mythological, mixed up occasionally, it may be, with a little history.

Next come the rituals. One sect has one particular form

of ritual and thinks that that is holy, while the rituals of another sect are simply arrant superstition. . . . So even in rituals there is no universal symbol which can command general recognition and acceptance. Where then is any universality? How is it possible then to have a universal form of religion? That, however, already exists. And let us see what it is.

We all hear about universal brotherhood, and how societies stand up especially to preach this. . . . As soon as you make a sect you protest against equality, and equality is no more. . . . When you hear such talk in the world, I would ask you to be a little reticent, to take care of yourselves, for behind all this talk is often the intensest selfishness. "In the winter sometimes a thunder-cloud comes up; it roars and roars, but it does not rain; but in the rainy season the clouds speak not, but deluge the world with water." So those who are *really* workers, and *really* feel at heart the universal brotherhood of man, do not talk much, do not make little sects for universal brotherhood; but their acts, their movements, their whole life, show out clearly that they in truth possess the feeling of brotherhood for mankind, that they have love and sympathy for all. They do not speak; they *do* and they *live*. This world is too full of blustering talk. We want a little more earnest work, and less talk.

So far we see that it is hard to find any universal features in regard to religion, and yet we know that they exist. We are all human beings, but are we all equal? Certainly not. Who says we are equal? Only the lunatic. Are we all equal in our brains, in our powers, in our bodies? One man is stronger than another; one man has more brain power than another. If we are all equal, why is there this inequality? . . .

Yet we know that the doctrine of equality appeals to our heart. We are all human beings; but some are men, and

some are women. Here is a black man; there is a white man; but all are men: all belong to one humanity. Various are our faces; I see no two alike, yet we are all human beings. Where is this one humanity? I find a man or woman, either dark or fair; and among all these faces I know that there is an abstract humanity which is common to all. I may not find it when I try to grasp it, to sense it and actualize it; yet I know for certain that it is there. If I am sure of anything it is of this humanity which is common to us all. It is through this generalized entity that I see you as a man or a woman. So it is with this universal religion which runs through all the various religions of the world in the form of God; it must and does exist through eternity. "I am the thread that runs through all these pearls," and each pearl is a religion or even a sect thereof. Such are the different pearls, and the Lord is the thread that runs through all of them; only the majority of mankind are entirely unconscious of it.

Unity in variety is the plan of the universe. We are all men, and yet we are all distinct from one another. As a part of humanity, I am one with you; and as Mr. So-and-So I am different from you. As a man you are separate from the woman; as a human being you are one with the woman. As a man you are separate from the animal, but as living beings, man, woman, animal, and plant, are all one; and as existence, you are one with the whole universe. That universal existence is God, the ultimate Unity in the universe. In Him we are all one. At the same time, in manifestation, these differences must always remain. In our work, in our energies, . . . these differences must always remain.

We find, then, that if by the idea of a universal religion it is meant that one set of doctrines should be believed in by all mankind, it is wholly impossible; it can never be; there can never be a time when all faces will be the same. Again,

if we expect that there will be one universal mythology, that is also impossible; it cannot be. Neither can there be one universal ritual. Such a state of things can never come into existence. If it ever did, the world would be destroyed, because variety is the first principle of life. What makes us formed beings? Differentiation. Perfect balance would be our destruction. . . . What makes motion possible in this universe? Lost balance. The unity of sameness can come only when this universe is destroyed, otherwise such a thing is impossible. Not only so; it would be dangerous to have it. We must not wish that all of us should think alike. There would then be no thought to think. We should be all alike, as the Egyptian mummies in a museum, looking at each other without a thought to think. It is this difference, this differentiation, this losing of the balance between us, which is the very soul of our progress, the soul of all our thought. This must always be.

What then do I mean by the ideal of a universal religion? I do not mean any one universal philosophy, or any one universal mythology, or any one universal ritual, held alike by all; for I know that this world must go on working, wheel within wheel, this intricate mass of machinery, most complex, most wonderful. What can *we* do then? We can make it run smoothly, we can lessen the friction, we can grease the wheels, as it were. How? By recognizing the natural necessity of variation. Just as we have recognized unity by our very nature, so we must also recognize variation. We must learn that truth may be expressed in a hundred thousand ways, and that each of these ways is true as far as it goes. We must learn that the same thing can be viewed from a hundred different standpoints, and yet be the same thing. . . . Through high philosophy or low, through the most exalted mythology or the grossest, through the most refined ritual-

ism or arrant fetishism, every sect, every soul, every nation, every religion, consciously or unconsciously, is struggling upward, towards God. Every vision of truth that man has is a vision of Him and of none else.

Suppose we all go with vessels in our hands to fetch water from a lake. One has a cup, another a jar, another a bucket, and so forth, and we all fill our vessels. The water in each case naturally takes the form of the vessel carried by each of us. . . . So it is in the case of religion; our minds are like these vessels, and each one of us is trying to arrive at the realization of God. God is like that water filling these different vessels, and in each vessel the vision of God comes in the form of the vessel. Yet He is One. He is God in every case. This is the only recognition of universality we can get.

So far it is all right theoretically, but is there any way of practically working out this harmony in religions? . . . That plan alone is practical which does not destroy the individuality of any man in religion, and at the same time shows him a point of union with all others. But so far, all the plans of religious harmony that have been tried, while proposing to take in all the various views of religion, have, in practice, tried to bind them all down to a few doctrines, and so have produced more new sects, fighting, struggling, and pushing against each other.

I have also my little plan. I do not know whether it will work or not, and I want to present it to you for discussion. What is my plan? In the first place I would ask mankind to recognize this maxim—"Do not destroy." Iconoclastic reformers do no good to the world. Break not, pull not anything down, but build. Help, if you can; if you cannot, fold your hands and stand by and see things go on. Do not injure, if you cannot render help. Say not a word against any man's convictions so far as they are sincere. Secondly, take man

where he stands, and from thence give him a lift. If it be true that God is the centre of all religions, and that each of us is moving towards Him along one of these radii, then it is certain that all of us *must* reach that centre. And at the centre, where all the radii meet, all our differences will cease. But until we reach there, differences there must be.

All these radii converge to the same centre. One, according to his nature, travels along one of these lines, and another, along another; and if we all push onward along our own lines, we shall surely come to the centre. "All roads lead to Rome." Each of us is naturally growing and developing according to his own nature; each will in time come to know the highest truth, for after all, men must teach themselves. What can you and I do? Do you think you can teach even a child? You cannot. The child teaches himself. Your duty is to afford opportunities and to remove obstacles. A plant grows. Do *you* make the plant grow? Your duty is to put a hedge around it and see that no animal eats up the plant, and there your duty ends. The plant grows of itself. So is it in regard to the spiritual growth of every man. None can teach you; none can make a spiritual man of you; you have to teach yourself; your growth must come from inside.

What can an external teacher do? He can remove the obstructions a little, and there his duty ends. Therefore help, if you can; but do not destroy. Give up all ideas that *you* can make men spiritual. It is impossible. There is no other teacher to you than your own soul. Recognize this. What comes of it? In society we see so many different natures. There are thousands and thousands of varieties of minds and inclinations. A thorough generalization of them is impossible; but for our practical purpose it is sufficient to have them characterized into four classes. First, there is the active man, the worker: he wants to work, and there is tremendous energy

in his muscles and his nerves. His aim is to work; to build hospitals, do charitable deeds, make streets, to plan and to organize. Then there is the emotional man who loves the sublime and the beautiful to an excessive degree. He loves to think of the beautiful, to enjoy the esthetic side of Nature, and adore Love and the God of Love. He loves with his whole heart the great souls of all times, the prophets of religion, and the Incarnations of God on earth. He does not care whether reason can or cannot prove that Christ or Buddha existed. He does not care for the exact date when the *Sermon on the Mount* was preached, or for the exact moment of Krishna's birth. What he cares for is their personalities, their lovable figures. Such is his ideal. That is the nature of the lover, the emotional man. Then there is the mystic, whose mind wants to analyze its own self, to understand the workings of the human mind, what the forces are that are working inside, and how to know, manipulate, and obtain control over them. This is the mystical mind. Then there is the philosopher, who wants to weigh everything and use his intellect, even beyond the possibilities of all human philosophy.

Now a religion to satisfy the largest proportion of mankind must be able to supply food for all these various types of mind; and where this capability is wanting, the existing sects all become one-sided. Suppose you go to a sect which preaches love and emotion. They sing and weep and preach love. But as soon as you say: "My friend, that is all right, but I want something stronger than this: a little reason and philosophy; I want to understand things step by step and more rationally," "Get out!" they say, and they not only ask you to get out but would send you to the other place if they could. The result is that that sect can only help people of an emotional turn of mind. They not only do not help others, but

try to destroy them; and the most wicked part of the whole thing is, that they will not only *not* help others, but do not believe in their sincerity.

Again, there are philosophers who talk of the wisdom of India and the East and use big psychological terms, fifty syllables long, but if an ordinary man like me goes to them and says: "Can you tell me anything to make me spiritual?" the first thing they would do would be to smile and say: "Oh, you are too far below us in your reason. What can you understand about spirituality?" These are high-up philosophers. They simply show you the door.

Then there are the mystical sects, who speak all sorts of things about different planes of existence, different states of mind, and what the power of the mind can do, and so on; and if you are an ordinary man and say: "Show me anything good that I can do; I am not much given to speculation; can you give me anything that will suit me?" they will smile and say: "Listen to that fool; he knows nothing; his existence is for nothing." And this is going on everywhere in the world. I would like to get extreme exponents of all these different sects and shut them up in a room, and photograph their beautiful derisive smiles!" This is the existing condition of religion, the existing condition of things.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. —*Psalms.*

To be spiritually minded is life and peace. —*St. Paul.*

He who knows that indestructible Being obtains what is the highest and indestructible, he without a shadow, without a body, without color, bright — yes, O friend, he who knows It, becomes all-knowing, becomes all.

—*Prasna-Upanishad.*

ST. FRANCIS AND THE DOVES

From: "Little Flowers of St. Francis

A certain youth one day, having snared many turtle doves, was taking them to market when St. Francis met him. And St. Francis, who ever had singular compassion for gentle creatures, gazed upon those doves with a pitying eye, and said to the youth, "O good youth, prithee give them to me, lest birds so gentle, that chaste, humble, and faithful souls are compared to them in the scriptures, fall into the hands of cruel men who would kill them."

Straightway the youth, inspired by God, gave them all to St. Francis, who received them into his bosom and began to speak sweetly to them, "O my little sisters, ye simple doves, innocent and chaste, wherefore suffer yourselves to be caught? Now will I rescue you from death, and make nests for you, that ye may be fruitful and multiply, according to the commandments of our Creator."

And St. Francis went and made nests for them all, and they took to the nests and began to lay eggs and rear their young before the eyes of the friars; and thus they abode tamely and grew familiar with St. Francis and the other friars, as if they had been chickens ever fed by their hands: nor did they depart until St. Francis gave them leave with his blessing. And he said to the youth that had given them to him, "Son, thou shalt yet be a friar in this Order and serve Jesus Christ in grace." And so it befell, for the said youth became a friar and lived in the Order with great holiness.

I know now that it is by loving and not by being loved that one can come nearest the soul of another. I know that love gives to him that loveth power over any soul beloved, a power that cannot be but for good.

—*George MacDonald.*

INVISIBLE LIGHT

By Sister Daya

(An Address delivered in the Temple of the Universal Spirit, Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, California, on the occasion of the "Festival of Lights," October 20, 1949.)

Tonight I feel free and clear, knowing that the tongues of flame will speak for me, the voice of beauty will sound through the music and reach hearts from which words alone might glance.

Swami Paramananda so often, on occasions like this, would say: "Let this be a Service of song; let it be a Service of light and loveliness!" And truly the great Power of the universe has no fairer or more potent ambassador than beauty. Beauty is and must always be compounded of light, not of darkness; of love, not of hate; of hope, not of despair; of faith and not of doubt.

And so we come together on this night to light the candles in our windows, on our altars, and in our shrine, to symbolize the triumph of light over darkness. We must remember what these little flames signify. We know that light is the core and the centre of all things beautiful and gracious which touch our hearts with passing wings and give us a sense of peace and ecstasy that not all the wealth of the world can bestow. We know that without light, life would be impossible—not only physically, but even from the standpoint of our subtler parts, where it shines invisible to outer eyes.

The modern poet, T. S. Eliot, has written a most noble apostrophe to this invisible light. "O Light Invisible," (he writes) "we praise Thee! Too bright for mortal vision. . . . O greater Light we praise Thee for the less!"

He then paints a glowing picture of the lesser light as it

touches the church spires at morning, or at evening slants upon the western doors—of light that glows on altars and in sanctuaries, midnight lights of those who meditate, and of the light that shines through stain-glass window-panes and is reflected on polished wood and stone. But of man's vision of this light, he says: "Our gaze is submarine. Our eyes look upward and see the light that fractures through unquiet water. We see the light but see not whence it comes. O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee!"

Today, more perhaps than at any time in recorded history, we need to remind ourselves of the Light Invisible, which we can detect only through our mind and heart when they are cleansed of selfishness and greed and cruelty, and of all the hateful, terrible things that alone are responsible for bringing darkness upon this earth.

There is no power that can rob us of this light, if we do not rob ourselves of it; because light is always available for man and will shine forth if we but create the right conditions. The requirements are very simple. We do not need great intellectual genius or the polish of sophistication: we need truth—the truth of our own immortal being—the truth that unites us with our fellows and with our ideal. Also we need strength, the strength which is able to stand against all odds for the things in which we believe. We need fundamental principles upon which we can base our life and our actions, and from which we cannot be shaken by expediency. Oh, I know that there are times when it seems as if compromise were necessary, and often it is. All life, in a sense, is a compromise; but there are certain principles which we sacrifice at our extreme peril.

The moment that we begin to turn aside and stand apart in stupid pride of race or color or creed, and think that we are appointed by God to be a little holier and better than our

fellows, from that moment there gathers in the eastern sky the cloud "no bigger than a man's hand" that some day will burst upon us in a storm of terrible fury; and when it does, let us not forget that it was our own creation.

I know not why I speak to you this way tonight; for it is a night in which our hearts are gentled by the beauty around us; and that is as it should be. I only desire that we carry this spirit out into the world. I only desire that these sparks of beauty be true sparks from an unquenchable fire; not just something of the moment; and that this evening should be for us more than a superficial experience. If there is a light within, we must uncover it.

We have got to find that invisible Light; we have got to recognize its reality. It is as real as the flames that burn here in these candles. Finding it within us, we fear no more; finding it, our path becomes clear before us; finding it, no one can cause us to cower in corners and become petrified with dread because of portents and prophecies. For when light is uncovered in the heart, courage is born and we dare to see things face to face in their true relationships.

Sometimes when we gaze into the night sky, it looks black, very black. There are brilliant stars, it is true, but beyond these there is the impenetrable blackness. But how do we know that that blackness is not light? Great mystics have spoken of a light that is dark with excess of brightness, and when we gaze into the sun, the face of it grows dark to our eyes. May not this also be true when we gaze into the depths of space? Personally I think that it is. Back of all things is the infinite Source of light, That which the ancient Hindu seers named, "Great Glory."

The Bhagavad Gita tells us: "That which is night to all beings, therein the self-subjugated remains awake; and in that where all beings are awake, that is night for the knower of

Self." It really says exactly what Eliot expresses in his poem, that there is a "Light Invisible"—the light of the mystic heart, the light of the envisioned soul; the light of the man who walks in love and beauty and truth, and lives in a world that often others do not perceive or comprehend.

Yes, to one who is truly awake to the inner Reality, the glitter of electricity, set in the noise and confusion of our city streets, is darkness. For us here on the physical plane, however, outer light is essential. We know that our body cannot survive without it. But also we know, or should know, that it does us little good when mental darkness descends upon us. Mental darkness can be overpoweringly real, and when it overshadows us, then we have to bring in something more profound than anything the mind alone can give. We have to drop all rationalizations and analyses, and with true humility invoke the Invisible Light which alone can save us.

There is so much fear in the world today. That is why this Festival of Lights has such a deep significance. Of course it is a Hindu Festival, but its appeal is universal. Do we not often refer to Christmas as the "Feast of Lights?" We surely associate it with lighted altars and windows and shining Christmas trees; and when the Christmas season comes around, the outer lights are reflected in the heart, and for a little time the living spirit of the Christ-child wipes out all past misery and darkness.

This same spirit is awake and abroad during the present Festival in India. Lights blossom there everywhere; they outline the roofs of the houses; they shine from the temples and from all the streams, where miniature boats float along with their cargo of flickering flame. But the heavens are dark: the moon is absent.

A strange time, you may think, to hold a celebration of

this type. Rather it is the right time. It shows us that we do not have to sink under the cloud that has dragged down our neighbor. We can keep to our own vision; we can kindle our own flame. There is a heaven within each heart, and the sun's glory can rise there for the individual.

Few indeed there are who have experienced that Light in its fullness. Occasionally we may catch a little flash of it, but even that can give us an idea of what the Buddha and the Christ meant—as well as other Great Ones—and what they were trying to do for mankind, when they held the divine Light high in a darkened world.

Our great task is to turn to this Light within; also it is our great responsibility. We little know how far our word goes, or our thought, or our attitude. Sometimes just to make conversation we echo despondent, foreboding and frightening rumors. We repeat these things and thereby infect our neighbor with feelings of unhappiness and unrest, emanating from us.

Better far to light the candles in our hearts and take our stand on That which nothing can change, neither life nor death.

Too often we think that the spiritual life consists in following the subtle turns in philosophy or in going through some sort of ritual. The spiritual life is simple and direct. Like the worship of light, it calls for no creed or dogma. All the world recognizes the potency of light; all the world needs it. True spirituality should be like that—an opening of the heart to the great illumination.

The question is: how to open the heart? It can be done each day with our awakening thought; it can be done through our attitude to our neighbor, by remembering that he is more than something moving around outside of us, that he is our self in another form, and that what hurts us hurts him and

vice versa. If we could only hold to this knowledge and apply it, our small flame might help to light up a whole world.

We cannot measure what we carry in our own hearts. Each man can be a beacon, if he will be. But let him not pride himself on the fact: everyone has the same light. Has it not been said: "That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world?" Also it is written: "If therefore the Light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

This darkness is what we have to guard against. We have to be awakened, be reminded that now, this moment we have got to face the issue. We have got to exemplify somehow in our thinking, in our speaking, in our social relationships, the significance of these ideals. The human heart is hungry for them. It is hungry for love, hungry for understanding, hungry for truth, for brotherhood and oneness, and tenderness, and kindness, and all that is akin to these. It is tired of the harsh, the self-righteous, the arrogant, the cruel. The world is surfeited with such things.

Yet when I say this, I can also say that the world is flooded with beauty—every dawning, every evening, all the noontides—beauty of mind, beauty of thought, beauty of spirit, and beauty of the physical. Everywhere there is beauty for those who have eyes to see. It is as if the Lord, the One, had poured from His inexhaustible pitcher the largesse of His blessing over the earth. That blessing is never lacking. It is we who have closed our hearts, have turned away from it. We have acquired the submarine vision, as the poet says. We see light refracted through the water.

We often hear it said: "This world is full of evil!" I have, however, found that the evil, the unkind, the vulgar and cruel are always very blatantly announcing their presence in our midst; whereas the good, the kind, the gentle and

compassionate type is very quiet; it does not parade itself, "doth not behave itself unseemly;" does not speak with a loud voice. It is like an underground river that flows beneath the desert sand, coming up here and there and sinking down again, but which, all unknown to the people on the surface, is feeding whole acres of lovely flowers. Even so are the good in this life. They number more than we can imagine. Their name is legion.

Do not think for a moment that the springtides would come flooding over the earth year after year, and the moon would continue to rise, and all go on in Nature as it does, if this whole world were as evil as some claim that it is? What I speak of tonight is our attitude, the *thought* that all is evil. While not ignoring the real problems that face humanity, for we cannot do that, let us seek in the heart of things that Mystery which gives birth to the stars and the elements and which gazes out at us through the eyes of a little child and makes its infinite appeal through all young things—growing plants, small kittens, baby squirrels—the myriad tiny playful creatures who brighten the face of the earth. How rudely we interrupt their play with our wars and our hatreds!

Does this sound sentimental? Not to one who understands. For there is something back of all this charming youth, back of all natural beauty—something behind the stars in the sky and the yearning in the human heart—something that is love, oneness, God! It must be so. I have heard men say: "I think that there is only a devil, not a God, up there. Such dreadful things happen!" They do; but I know that no devil ever gave birth to a Jesus Christ or a St. Francis or a Mahatma Gandhi or a Sri Ramakrishna. Out of a diabolical source the beautiful and the divine cannot come. Out of darkness cannot come light ever. The divine, however, can be veiled in our hearts, the light can be shut off; then we have evil, the

other side of v-e-i-l. The very moment that veil is lifted, the light floods in again. Man's true nature comes to the fore; his real Self manifests once more, and he realizes that he has been walking in the darkness of ignorance, and that therefore ignorance is the one great evil. "Father forgive them for they know not what they do!" That was the Christ's statement. Ignorance! They were doing all those unspeakable things to Him, because they did not know; because they were darkened, blinded, submerged by ignorance.

Let us be more like little children. We have been thinking we were so clever and up-to-date, so superior to all this child-ish business of religion. But there is that in every heart that needs to be the child. I think that there is nobody who does not feel at times like a lost child, reaching for a hand that will lead and sustain—the Divine-Mother Hand, if you like. We all need that guidance. When everything else fails, then we need that impalpable, unchanging mother-love that we feel and sense and know must be in the universe for each one of us.

In order to receive love, however, we must give love. That is the secret. We cannot be cold and harsh and shut away from the needs of others and then, in our distress, cry: "O Mother, protect me! Give me love! Give me light!" and expect to have our prayer answered. When we withhold our love from others, we close our door in the face of the Supreme Giver. We must make of ourselves channels through which may be poured the very love we crave. For if we need it, others need it too, and in giving to them we open our-selves to receive it.

What really does man want? Let us be clear concerning our goal. Go down into the business world, go out into the law-courts and see what people are doing. You will find them fighting and struggling, every man contending with his neigh-

bor. Go, and then ask yourself, "What is it all for? What is the issue of life? What do we hope to gain out of existence?" Is it material things, comforts? We have them. We have nearly everything that human ingenuity can devise. We can live just by touching buttons, so to speak, and yet, in the midst of all this, the heart can be torn to shreds. A man, however, can go out into the wilderness and live in a cabin, and it will seem like the kingdom of heaven, if he has heaven in his soul.

At once we are confronted with our own inability to express our ideal in its wholeness. We should like to love as the Christ loved, but we cannot; we should like to be full of light, but darkness invades us. What are we to do? There is, I believe, only one thing to do, and that is just to keep on praying, as Goethe prayed, for ever more light. Also we must be willing to use the light that we have. It may be only a little rush light, but still it is light. Do not ignore it just because it isn't the sun. Do not ignore the task you are given to perform or the place that you are given to fill, because it is not bigger or more in the public eye. Be like Joe Jefferson who got his first start in the theatre through taking the part of the hind legs of a calf. We may be called upon to play the hind legs of a calf, as it were, but if we do the job as it should be done, our reputation will be made.

There is not the least little thing, not a grain of dust, not a bit of sand that has not the signet of God upon it; not a task that cannot serve as a way to supreme peace and enlightenment. Never throw things aside as though they were unworthy of your effort—just something to be got rid of—but serve Him, the One, through everything your hands touch, with every word that you speak. Try this and then see if there isn't born in your heart light, illumination, the Presence of the One whose Name is "Great Glory!"

It is simple, so simple that we overlook it at every turn. It has always been that way. It is written in the sky. It is written on the hills. It is written on the face of the waters for every man to read. But because it interferes with our ego, with our little way of doing things, we cast it aside. We talk big things and make great claims, and all the time we have ignored the "Way, the Truth and the Life."

There isn't a religion in the world, whether in India, China, America, or wherever it may be, that has ever said differently. The Lord Buddha stated: "What most is needed is a loving heart." Christ said the same thing in wonderful words. Lao-tze of China taught that the sage by putting his self in the lowest place is lifted up to the highest, that those who are humble will be exalted. The spiritual verdict on this is unanimous; yet we go on in the opposite direction. We are afraid that people will fail to notice us if we do not proclaim ourselves. We are thinking of our little self all the time, and that type of thought puts out the lights all over the world.

Often we say: "What I think or what I do doesn't matter." Does it not? This thing that we call humanity, what is it? It is you and I and the other man—just a multiplication of people like us, with each one thinking: "What I do cannot make any difference. I cannot help: it is all too big!" Possibly in the mass it is. But if each one tonight can go forward in full faith that it is light and truth and beauty which underlie existence, the transformation that will occur in us and in the world immediately about us, may surprise us.

Without these creative principles there is death. Life blooms and blossoms when it is watered with the waters of love, and it shrivels at the root when hate touches it. This in itself must prove that we are children of light. We are born to love; we are born to trust; we are born to be good and not to be evil—to be more than good: to be consecrated, anointed of the Lord, the Infinite One.

When we say our final prayer this night, let us feel that there is not merely empty space around us, just a room with a few candles burning; but let us be aware of a divine Presence here, Beauty, Infinite Love, brooding over us all; and waiting, waiting for us to awaken and go to the Father's House of infinite consciousness. May we be blessed by that Presence and carry It with us out into the world—not only tonight, but tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, till the Sun of Glory rises and the darkness gives way to dawn.

HOME-GOING

By John Muir

The rugged old Norsemen spoke of death as "home-going." So the snow-flowers go home when they melt and flow to the sea, and the rock ferns, after unrolling their fronds to the light and beautifying the rocks, roll them up close again in the autumn and blend with the soil.

Myriads of rejoicing living creatures, daily, hourly, perhaps every moment, sink into death's arms, dust to dust, spirit to spirit.

All the merry dwellers of the trees and streams, and the myriad swarms of the air, called into life by the sunbeam of a summer morning, go home through death, wings folded perhaps in the last red rays of sunset of the day they were first tried. Trees towering in the sky, braving storms of centuries, flowers turning faces to the light for a single day or hour, having enjoyed their share of life's feast—all alike pass on and away under the law of death and love. Yet all are our brothers and they enjoy life as we do, share heaven's blessings with us, die and are buried in hallowed ground, come with us out of eternity and return into eternity.

INVOCATION

By Esther Orlander

Goddess of Beauty, grant me this great boon!
I would be beautiful, not as this tree
Is beautiful, which holds thy mystery
Within her shadowed arms, which wears thy moon
As a forehead-jewel and a snared star
As a trinklet; I would be lovely, not as this lake
Is lovely, which unto herself can take,
From earth and air and sky, from near and far,
Thy forms incarnate, thy motions and thy hues;
Not mirrored beauty, not beauty bestowed, my plea;
Bolder far the boon I ask of thee:
So let my spirit, Goddess, with thee fuse
That Beauty's Self, not beautiful, I'll be;
The Maker, not the made, eternally.

The ideal life is in our blood and never will be still. Sad will be the day for any man when he becomes contented with the thoughts he is thinking and the deeds he is doing—where there is not forever beating at the doors of his soul some great desire to do something larger, which he knows that he was meant and made to do. —*Phillips Brooks.*

There is beauty in the sunlight
And the soft blue beams above.
Oh, the world is full of beauty
When the heart is full of love.
—*Author Unknown.*

The Blessed Lord said: "I am eternal, world-destroying Time!" —*Bhagavad Gita.*

WHERE IS PEACE?

By Srimati Gayatri Devi

(Sunday Address given at Ananda Ashrama, Cohasset, Mass., August 20, 1950.)

May there be peace in heaven,
Peace in the sky,
Peace across the waters.
May there be peace on earth.
May peace flow from the herbs, plants and trees.
May all the celestial beings radiate peace.
May peace pervade all quarters.
Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

No other prayer seems as appropriate as this ancient Vedic benediction while we consider the theme of peace this morning. To speak on peace is to voice my highest aims and deepest hopes. From my very earliest spiritual infancy the idea of peace was driven into my mind and heart and consciousness, not only as a great goal for which we should aspire but also as a way of life which we must inculcate in our everyday existence. Of course, in our age peace has become a pertinent issue because we are all greatly stirred by the fact that over and over human beings, through their folly, misguided zeal and lack of wisdom, destroy peace by which men could live on this earth.

What are we to do about it? That is the thought which rises in our mind. Is there anything we can do? Should we let the world go by and follow its own course? Shall we take an indifferent attitude or perhaps become philosophic by remaining as the witnesses to the destruction of world peace? These are the questions we must answer, each for himself, so that we may live by our own conviction and faith in a world torn by war.

Great men—and by "great men" I always refer to those who deserve the title of greatness, who are farseeing, wise and humanitarian, whose heart and mind pulsate with com-

passion and sympathy for mankind—have taught us again and again that we could live on earth in peace, that peace could be brought about not only on a small scale but in large measure. Naturally this gives us hope. However, it is not enough to listen to the voice of the wise and place our faith in their words. We have to find the practical means by which we may establish that peace, keep it, maintain it, and prevent its interference or disturbance.

Mahatma Gandhi was the great apostle of peace in our age. I think and speak of him with the highest pride and deepest gratitude because he was India's son. India, having been the real leader in spiritual ideals, had given birth to such a man who could speak to the world his heart and show the world a better way. We must remember, however, that someone may come as a messenger of Truth, but his voice is not always heeded nor his message understood, nor his way generally adopted by mankind. This being the case, we must recognize that there must be at least a few, a small minority, who would consider the idea of peace in a warring world.

Mahatma Gandhi pointed out very clearly—and I have his words here which I will read shortly—that it would be impossible to have peace on earth unless we could really elevate mankind. What a gigantic task that is! Men who are trained and taught to fight and wage warfare, men who unconsciously love violence and destruction, to change them so that they may become not only lovers of peace but possibly peacemakers! Gandhi says that to be able to do this we have to deal with human beings' conscience. He tells us that the conscience of mankind must be elevated.

Before I go further, I will read his message given to the world many years ago with the primary objective of teaching his own people to carry on a protest or a warfare without violence, without bloodshed, and without any destructive

means. Gandhi taught India the use of moral weapons and trained his followers in the warfare that can be waged with high principles. He says, "We must either let the law of love rule us through and through, or not at all. War will only be stopped when the conscience of mankind has become sufficiently elevated to recognize the undisputed supremacy of the law of love in all the walks of life. Some say this will never come to pass. I shall retain the faith until the end of my earthly existence that it shall come to pass." Of course, Mahatma Gandhi's earthly existence has come to an end, and he had gone on retaining that faith that war could be stopped, it could be abolished from our world by following the means of elevating the conscience of mankind through the supremacy of love.

When we begin to talk about love being the way of peace, we have to define what we mean by love. We need to realize that it is not sentimentality, nor is it a form of indulgence which we are to extend to those inclined to do damage on their path of evil. Love means simply this: understanding of the human heart and utilization of that understanding in order to alter the human heart. To my mind, love represents transcendence of intolerance and prejudice. It is not the condescending attitude of a person who thinks he is superior and somehow tolerates those who have not come to see things in his own light.

Sometimes I am very much amused because even while we are discussing peace we can enter into a heated argument which is likely to end not only in personal disagreement but in resentment and violent dislike. That only proves that peace is not a spiritual issue with us. It is rather an opinion, a view. I want to point this out: in order to find peace, give peace, keep peace, we must make it more than an opinion or a political point of view. You say "peace," immediately

the very suggestion of the word brings to our mind the political picture of the world. We become aware that human beings are against one another and using diabolical weapons and instruments to settle their disputes over conflicting ideologies. Peace has become a political issue which disturbs us habitually. We must make peace a matter of conviction. If we do that, perhaps we could cope with the world problem without becoming agitated. And in this we need to be reasonable and practical.

You ask me at this point, "What would you call reasonable? And what would be the practical way of gaining peace?" I would like to point out that peace must begin with the individual. In this I hear myself echoing the voice that led me on the spiritual path. As you know, Swami Paramananda was a great believer in peace. In 1940, a short while before he left this earth, he felt real anguish. The Germans had entered France. Swamiji used to listen to the radio. One morning he said, "I can't sleep at night. Terrible things are going on in the world, suffering, destruction, and it is beating against me." Then he remarked, on the final day of his liberation, "They do not understand one another. That is why they are against one another." How true that is. Because there is lack of understanding, there is the clash of ideologies.

You say, "It is more than a clash of ideologies. It is a clash of principles. We are the righteous ones. We are on the side of what is good and noble." If you lived in the other countries, you would find out they are taught the same; they too are on the side of what is right and good and noble. What are you going to do about it? You are right and he is right, and you do not agree. So you are going to have not only to quarrel; you are going to fight one another. Where does that lead? Nowhere. It brings destruction, individual, collective, international. That is what is happening to our world.

How may we correct this? We have to proceed with understanding. We have to realize that understanding is not a viewpoint we voice because we have worked out a system in which we place our trust. Understanding is the product of profound wisdom. A person who is capable of extending it to his fellowmen is a deep individual. He lives by something other than ordinary ideas and ideologies. He has higher desires and aspirations. Only a person imbued with spiritual idealism will be able to offer to the world understanding and more—peace. That is the reason I say that it must begin with the individual. The individual must not merely ask, "where is peace?" but if he knows where it is, he will carry it with him here and there, everywhere. He must, however, first having found its source, establish it within himself.

How many of us can claim to have found our peace? Have we? We have to be honest, absolutely frank with ourselves. Have we really found peace? We say, "At times." It is true: we have our moments when we are absolutely at peace within ourselves, we are at peace with the world, we have no quarrel with anyone, nothing troubles or disturbs us, we are utterly at ease. You may regard that as your spiritual state because it is in that state of unification with the best and deepest within us, we are above turmoil and conflict. Those moments are very rare in the individual's life. Our peace is easily disturbed. It can even be destroyed. Knowing this to be so, we must not look for the source of peace outside ourselves. We must find it first within and try to establish ourselves in it so that we may extend its benefit to the world without.

This may not be the popular idea. You can get a group of people to formulate a League, sit at conference tables, talk, talk, talk. Just think, for the last thirty years—since the first World War had been over—the amount of talking

that has been going on. We have done much talking, but have we done something substantial? We know this certainly is a great reflection, a sad commentary on human beings. It truly is. We take pride in this marvellous age of science, advancement and progressive civilization. But are we really advanced spiritually? Are we fit to call ourselves civilized? Civilized people do not kill one another. They do not believe in destruction for the sake of acquisition or power. We deprive ourselves of the noble name of civilization when we forget its true principles. Therefore, how can we be so proud? We should be humble and try to mend our ways.

Do you think you can say, "Well, I am not concerned with war. I do not believe in it." If you really do not believe in war, then carry out your conviction in your personal life. Once I was greatly amused. I knew a young man who claimed to be a conscientious objector. We used to discuss philosophic subjects. Once we disagreed, and he lost his temper. I quietly said to him, "I thought those who are conscientious objectors are not supposed to give way to violence." See how inconsistent we are. A man says, "I won't fight a war, I will stay at home," but all the time he encourages anger and hate which disturbs his peace. Let us not deceive ourselves and play a game of falsehood. If we love peace sufficiently, if we want it, then we have to do everything in our power to exhibit it in our own personal lives.

No one can be a peace-lover or a peacemaker or a peace-giver who lives on the surface. A man of peace is always a man of Spirit. The question is: Can men of Spirit guide the world today? That is our primary problem. We are not led by men who are wise, who are noble in their instinct, and are above greed, ambition and self-aggrandizement. Some of you may not like my analysis, but it is true. If you had a few leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, if other countries produced

one who could be his equal in spiritual stature, we could hope to have peace not only in sections of the world but on a large scale.

There will always be those who would not agree with you, but if the spiritual force is in ascendence, it would work in spite of opposition. At least, this is my own belief and conviction. In order to bring peace, we will have to retain our faith in people and begin to work from our own small circles. I have given up hope long ago—and not because I am a pessimist—to see peace on earth, as Christ spoke of it. You have to change all human beings at once, you have to speed on their evolution. That would be almost an impossible task. Nevertheless, because we cannot have perfect conditions everywhere, should we give up our high hopes and dreams? Suppose you say to yourself, "Because we can't stop wars—and already we have witnessed two and the preparation for another—we had better renounce our impossible expectation or perhaps join those who are encouraging war." Could you do it? If you have any vision, you would not be capable of changing your attitude. You would not want to join the common crowd because your idealistic efforts have failed. You would still be able to say to yourself, "I may not live to see peace everywhere, nevertheless I am going to work toward its attainment all the remainder of my days."

How do we work for peace? In our own individual lives, in our dealings with others, in our social relationships and political views. Peace is something that proceeds from our inner being. Peace that is real, and peace that is not fluctuating, comes from the source which lies deeply within man himself. Therefore, we do not go around asking, "Where is peace? If I do not find it at home, I will seek it abroad. If America is without it, India will give it to me." Restless people reason in this manner. They are so stirred by some

situation and want to run away from it by finding a place to hide. We cannot really escape, as we can never run away from ourselves. If we could do this, we would have peace even in the midst of turmoil. We must make this thing we call peace our acqusition, something we really possess. Then whatever may happen or wherever we may be driven through circumstances, we would not be without it.

It is to be remembered that peace always entails conquest. It means transcendence over oneself, as man's real battle is with his own self. Being a realist, I bring this to your attention. To have the profound peace within, you will have to conquer much. You need not conquer the world; you have to conquer yourself. A Christian thinker wrote: "Five great enemies of peace inhabit with us: avarice, ambition, envy, anger and pride. If those enemies were to be banished, we should infallibly enjoy perpetual peace."

It would be interesting to verify how true is what Petrarch says. You will learn from experience that he is right. When you are without peace, can you become sufficiently objective in order to discover what is depriving you of it? In self-justification we frequently seek cause for our peacelessness outside; we blame people and circumstances. True analysis would reveal that the fault lies within us, in our reaction through the unconquered forces of our own nature. If avarice, pride, ambition, anger or envy is the instrumental cause of our disturbed state of mind, we need to gradually overcome them by first admitting humbly that they exist. It is not good to be complacent about ourselves. Desiring what is best and finest, we must expose ourselves to the spiritual force within and thus aim to abolish the lower tendencies and impulses.

How often have I heard the statement, "I must have peace at any cost." When we are without it, we long to be rein-

stated in our former status. Peacelessness is never the happy or exalted state of our being, and therefore we long to return to what is wholesome and normal. Peace is our normal, wholesome state of being, although you may observe that many people are in habitual turmoil. Because the spiritual urge is within us, we are often stirred in order to gain our real status, the state of peace. However, we learn that it is not by any external means that we can become peaceful, but rather by reaching our innermost depth, the home of the Spirit.

Fenelon, one of the Christian mystics, wrote: "Peace does not dwell in outward things, but within the soul. We may preserve it in the midst of the bitterest pain if our will remain firm and submissive. Peace in this life springs from acquiescence, not in an exemption from suffering." We can easily give the above a wrong interpretation and take a morbid attitude. Some people have a martyr complex. They glorify suffering and pain and somehow bear it, holding to peace in outward appearance. This is neither helpful nor healthy. We need to transcend sorrow and tribulation by diving into the hidden pools of peace within ourselves. In times of disturbance and grief we can be soothed by its healing touch. Life would be meaningless, empty, colorless, and unprofitable without the natural human experiences of loss and pain. We endure and go beyond them with acquiescence. When we have learned to do this, we have succeeded in bringing the real part of ourself to manifest itself.

The type of peace Christ possessed could be maintained when he rode in glory through the throngs or as he stood before Pilate to be judged and condemned to death. We say, "He was superhuman. A Christ could do it. It is possible only for a Gandhi to die smiling and raise his hand in forgiveness to his assassin while retaining his complete equi-

librium and peace." How can we explain this? In man there is the superhuman, something greater than himself. He is the instrument of a Power.

It is from these great lives, not from the lesser men, we take our lesson. Let us never have any model that is mediocre and imperfect, as far as you and I are capable of visualizing prefection through our love of idealism. We want to be drawn toward those who are spiritual men, whose influence on our life will be transforming. How we need in this world of ours, so full of confusion and bewilderment, exemplary characters who by their lives prove to us that peace is tangible and real, it is man's own possession, it is part and parcel of his being.

In order to make peace part of ourselves, we must desire the spiritual life, keep our contact with the Source, and keep it habitually. That must be the strongest feature in our existence. It would be the protection and safeguard against the onslaughts of life. Swami Paramananda told us before he passed away, "If you revolve in the consciousness of the Divine and remain in His protection, not even a hair of your head will be touched." You may think that it is a selfish act to pick up a handful of people in a war-torn world and place them in safety when many will be sacrificed. But there must be individuals and places who must be protected in order to serve the cause of peace.

The Swami believed that special places should be dedicated to peace. He said peace should be our watchword, our daily slogan. It should be the goal, and the means as well; and our daily life, so full of struggle, pitfalls, discouragement and disappointment, should aim constantly to achieve that goal. We must strive, make continuous effort, overcome discouragment and disappointment, and eventually become peaceful. We know that if we persevere, a time comes when

we say, "I am changed. My turbulent, disturbed self has found itself and made peace within. Now no matter what happens in the world without, I can hold fast and maintain my equilibrium. I want to live by the highest in me and find inspiration in it."

It is then that we come to look upon life as a witness, without becoming callous, unfeeling or unsympathetic. We do not sacrifice our peace because the rest of mankind is caught in the whirlpool of ignorance and delusion. We try to help them by the peace which radiates from us. It becomes our gift to the world. If you choose, you can be a peace-giver in a world at war. You who are living in this age, make your contribution to that side of the scale on which constructiveness outweighs destructiveness. We do it by the practical application of our ideals. Following in the footsteps of the great souls who show us the way, we go forth in faith from darkness into light, out of turmoil into serenity, and enjoy peace habitually. Blessed is the man who carries peace consciously and unconsciously and bestows it to others in thoughts, words and actions.

IN THE NAME OF MY PEOPLE

By Nipo Tahoche-Num Strongheart

(Concluded from the Summer Issue.)

Sister Daya: Do you think that in the hearts of the Indian people there is still great bitterness towards the white people, or is their sense of the Presence of God, the immanence of God, enough to give them a certain forgiveness, a certain bigness of vision concerning things?

Strongheart: No, I will not say there is a bitterness. They were disappointed in the white race, but there was not bitterness, and in many ways they have forgiven. You will find in

the War Department records showing how the Indian people volunteered to be in service, not because they wanted to fight, but to help the white man protect his home—the same home that we people fought to protect. We did not say: "Well, now the white man is having a war; let him fight it out alone." Oh, no! We came to help him. We contributed not only in man-power, but in goods, in products of mother earth—in many ways. We do not hold back; knowledge belongs to all. If God gives me something—well, it is His creation, and I must pass His gift on to someone else. When it comes to actually helping, we people have done more to help the white man than the white man ever did to help the Indians.

Sister Daya: I think there is no doubt about that.

Strongheart: The white man sent money, food, clothes, medical aid across the water, all over the world; but when it comes to the Indian, he forgets all about him. The Indian is up in the Reservation, pushed in like a bird in a cage. You have heard about the Navajos and Hopis and their bitter plight. The Sioux people are having trouble now, and many other tribes. The Californians, for instance, have endured more insult, more deprivation, than many other tribes. All this beautiful California the Indians ceded to the government with the understanding that the government was to provide homes for them, schools, education and developments, so that they could come up and take their place in civilization. But the government forgot all about those treaties, and today the California Indians are known as people without a home or a country. That is true. Many other tribes are the same way.

Sister Daya: Have the Indians the right of citizenship? Can they vote?

Stongheart: Oh, yes. In 1924 there was a law passed. I was very active in that. I traveled on lecture tours and I urged people to sign petitions to the members in the Houses

of Congress, asking the passage of that law. And that law is in effect: all Indians are allowed to vote. They hold the right of franchise. But there were certain states like New Mexico and Arizona which only recently recognized that law. Until a year ago, more or less, Arizona and New Mexico deprived the Indians of that right.

Sister Daya: You spoke the other evening of a law that while making it possible for an Indian to go out in the world and earn his living would take away his tribal rights.

Strongheart: Well, that is what they call an "Emancipation Law." It is a farce! The thing is, an Indian who lives on the Reservation, if he wants to have complete and unrestricted citizenship and go out and establish himself in a city, must forfeit or relinquish all his tribal rights. He must no longer consider himself a member of his tribe; he is no longer an Indian. To gain the one thing, he must lose the other. So the question is, which is better for him, to have the right to vote or have the right of a home?

Sister Daya: Is that still under discussion, or has it been already accomplished?

Strongheart: It has been passed in one House and in the other it is still under discussion. We are trying to defeat that bill; it is not a good thing. The reason that they want to pass it is because some people are interested in acquiring Indian lands, so they say: "All right, if you want to live like a white man, leave the Reservation." Then when the Indian forfeits his lands, they go under government title, and then these white people buy it up. That is really what this law is created for, to throw the Indian out of his home, so that the white person can get hold of his property. There are some Indians who would like to go out to establish themselves, but then they would have to give up their tribal rights. If a Swede wants to come over from Sweden and become a

citizen of the United States does that mean that he would have to say that he was never a Swede? He still loves his own people. He is a part of them. I respect a man who loves his own people, whoever they are. God made him one thing, we cannot make him something else. I am part of the blood of my own people; I love my people; I am proud of them; I want to be helpful to them; but if I have to deny them, and pull myself away from them, then how can I be helpful to them? That is not the way.

(To be continued)

FROM A DISCIPLE'S NOTE BOOK

(Continued from the Summer Issue)

There is no end to the influence of a holy life or to the memories that cluster about it. For this reason the disciple finds it exceedingly difficult to write "finis" to this record, which though dealing with days and years passed at the Vedanta Centre of Boston and at the Ananda Ashrama in California, actually center around the life and activities of Swami Paramananda.

The least word from him sometimes conveyed an unforgettable lesson; and yet the disciple well realizes that that word, recorded on paper, may have little meaning to those who never knew him. This also applies to the many small incidents that have made up the warp and woof of life as it has been lived both at the eastern and western centres.

A thing assumes significance spiritually because of its innate truth and beauty, or the influence it radiates, but not because it is ponderous in a material or worldly sense. Often, too, just a tender memory of an illumined personality engaged in some trivial action, will make the heart expand with an inspiration which it seems impossible to pass on.

Even as she writes these words, the disciple is once more

standing on a road, beside the main house, afterwards known as "The Cloister." It is during the very first weeks of occupancy of the Ashrama, and the Swami has been here, there and everywhere, making new and exciting discoveries concerning this newly acquired mountain retreat. Now he is poised half way up a brush-covered hill as with face flushed, hair rumpled and eyes shining with interest, he calls out to those waiting below: "Oh, do come up here! There is the strangest creature here! It has such wise little eyes!" The disciple scrambles up to his side and finds that the "strange creature" is a small horned toad, sitting very still on the ground. Quickly she stoops, picks it up in her hand, and starts to scratch its crowned head. Then she begins to descend, still holding it in her hand. But the Swami exclaims: "Let it go! It will not be happy if you take away its freedom!"

This was typical of his attitude toward all living things. Occasionally, however, something had to be destroyed. Like all California mountain land, the Ashrama had its quota of rattlesnakes, and these could not be left to injure an adult, or possibly a child, walking carelessly down the overgrown paths. The Swami, always balanced in these matters, knew that the public must be protected. Yet the disciple remembers how regretfully, on one of these occasions, he remarked: "Poor thing! It looked so innocent, and it made no motion to strike or rattle when the men struck at it."

He used always to warn the new-comers, during the hot summer days, to watch where they were going, and not to walk where the growth was thick and there were many rocks, unless they kept wide awake.

One day the disciple repeated this warning to a visitor who was new to California, having just arrived. At her words, another guest who had strong views on the subject, took her up rather sharply. "There is no need of such

a warning!" she said. "If one has a really childlike heart, one can go anywhere with perfect safety."

Now this may be true. The Swami very possibly would have agreed to it; but also he knew how rare, how very rare it is to find, even among religious aspirants, true divine child-heartedness. So the disciple answered quietly:

You speak "apparent words of wisdom"; but did you ever hear the story that Sri Ramakrishna used to tell about a disciple who was taught by his master that God was everywhere and in everything? One day as this disciple was walking along the road, there were cries of "Mad elephant! Mad elephant! Get out of the way!" Looking up, the disciple saw the elephant approaching, apparently in a sort of frenzy, while the *mahout* on his back called out his warning.

"God is everywhere!" thought the disciple. "Why then should I move? I'll stand right here."

In a moment the elephant was upon him and he felt himself lifted up by the elephant's trunk, but lost consciousness as he was dashed against the ground.

When he recovered his senses, he bitterly reproached his teacher for what he felt was false instruction. "You told me," he said, "that God was everywhere. I believed you and acted accordingly, and yet look what happened to me!"

"God *is* everywhere," answered the teacher. "Why then did you not listen to His voice when, in the form of the *mahout,* he warned you to get out of the way?"

The story was apt, but the lady tightened her lips and repeated her statement about the child-heart. The very next day a tragic episode occurred which seemed to leave room for no further controversy: A tiny child on the ranch adjoining the Ashrama, ran between a maddened rattlesnake and some police dogs that had it cornered. Of course the child was bitten, and died that night.

There were other snakes at the Ashrama in more or less profusion in those early days—beautiful, swift racers that lay on the tops of the bushes, or slid over them with speed and grace, a very aristocratic snake indeed; coral snakes, handsomely ringed in yellow and black; yellow and brown striped king snakes with a crown of gold on the head—the deadly foe of the rattler; and large brown-patterned gopher snakes, protected by the state, which occasionally were killed by the over-zealous, to the Swami's grief and indignation, for these gopher snakes are harmless and destructive to rodents.

Let not the modern pilgrim, however, be uneasy when he visits the Ashrama, since all this was years and years ago. Today rarely is a snake to be seen. Either, like St. Patrick, the Divine Presence has driven them away, or the encroaching habitations of men have prompted their retreat to more removed places.

It can be seen from all this that the western development of the Swami's work brought in new problems and conditions and a different type of experience for the workers, especially for those who came from the Atlantic side. Standing in the present, as one gazes forward from this point of inception in the past, people, events, developments, do not move before the inner eye in an orderly and sequential manner: they present a synthetic picture, so to speak—little glimpses here, little happenings there, shining in the midst of the whole like vignettes set on an illumined page.

For instance, there was the first public Service at the Ashrama, held out of doors, at the rear of the Cloister, on April 29, 1923. It is easy for the disciple to feel again the expectancy that she felt then, that everybody felt, the hope and the anticipation. Who would come? was the general question. How many old friends? How many new? The road leading up to the Ashrama could be plainly seen from

the terrace, and all were more or less on watch as the first cars began to toil up the hill. It was a case of "Sister Anne, sister Anne, do you see anybody coming?", though the question was not asked in dread, as in the story of "Blue Beard," quite the reverse, and the Swami was as eager as the rest as he smilingly listened to the reports that were brought to him, and occasionally even went himself to the edge of the terrace to take a look.

Among those who came on that first day were people who were genuinely interested, but also there were the curiosity-seekers, fanatics and cranks. Happily the pure and one-pointed idealism implicit in the Swami's message discouraged all who were looking for the wierd and the sensational and through the years has acted as a very effective sieve for separating the dross from the pure gold.

It was fortunate that from the start there was shelter for those who came to live at the Ashrama as resident members. Of course they came by degrees, which made it possible to provide further accommodation as it was needed. The stucco part of the building, now known as Ashrama Cloister, provided housing for the first two or three who came on from the east: the disciple (who was already there), Sister Devamata, Sister Seva and Mangala. The brothers who were later to play such a big part in the upbuilding of the Ashrama, had not then appeared upon the scene.

The Swami immediately started to add and change and plan, and bit by bit the present Ashrama emerged. Cabins were constructed in a side-canyon below and to the east of the Cloister, and on the slope of the hill above the parking-place and the garage. The disciple recalls with joy the months she spent in one of these small habitations on the canyon side; the utter silence at night, typical of the whole Ashrama, was intensified there and made more vivid by the vagrant

sounds which occasionally broke it: the rustling of the live-oak tree which spread its great branches above the roof, the drumming of rain on the shingles, the movements of little wild things outside, raccoons, possums, and an occasional screech owl, rather startling at 2 A.M. when perched immediately overhead. And then of course there were the ever-present coyotes who would go off simultaneously in a crescendo of screams and barks at any hour of the night.

Once, happening to be awake just before dawn, the disciple saw one of these coyotes returning home after his night's hunting. He came slowly down the path which led to her cabin, and when he got right under her window suddenly he sat down. It was bright moonlight, but he was blissfully unaware of a human presence, and with his plumey tail spread out, surveyed the landscape and smelled the smells while the disciple enjoyed this play of Nature unobserved.

Often on foggy nights, the blackness was so impenetrable that the dwellers in the cabins had to grope their way down, for even their flashlights were unable to pierce the mist.

One evening, the talk after dinner had been about mountain lions and the possibility of their wandering down from the higher hills. Thus the two or three cabin-dwellers were a bit on edge as they stepped from the lighted cloister out into the night. They had reached the dry river bed at the bottom of a small draw when a creature suddenly leaped from the darkness into the glow of their flashlights. A very nervous member of the group jumped up into the air and gave a scream that carried up above to the ears of the Swami who was in his room getting ready to go to bed. In a few moments his voice was heard anxiously calling: "What has happened? Is anyone hurt?" The answer came back, a little sheepishly: "No, Swamiji, there is nothing wrong; it was only Hilda who became frightened when Bengal, the pussy cat, without warning bounded out in front of her."

The Ashrama was wild country, it is true, but not really wild enough to do more than provide a few false alarms. It gave the Swami infinite scope for his daily walks up and over the hills. Not idle walks, for always he was planning, planning. Reaching some vantage point he would survey the lay of the land, and then draw in the dust with his stick the changes and improvements that he had in mind. Undoubtedly daily chores were neglected by the workers when the Swami fared forth in this way, for all were eager to catch his vision and hear him give voice to his dream.

On the Ashrama property, a little to the east, is an especially beautiful section called "Oak Canyon." It is reminiscent of the eastern woods, for it is deeply shaded with sycamore and live oak trees, while enormous ferns grow in the creek bed. At that early date a trail (obliterated by the great flood which came at the turn of the year, 1933-34) led up to it. On this path, one late afternoon in the 1920's, the Swami with perhaps a dozen companions, is walking toward the shade of the trees. Finally he gains the canyon and sits down, facing a vista of valley and distant hills, while those who are with him group themselves around him to listen as he tells them the wonderful story of the "Ramayana," especially that part which concerns the building of the bridge between India and Ceylon (known as Lankha in those days of long ago), by means of which Lord Rama would be able to cross the dividing waters and rescue his beautiful and faithful wife, Sita, who had been stolen by Ravanna, the demon king, and borne away in an airship to his far-away palaces.

Now Lord Rama had no engineers or army of men to help him; he had to depend entirely on the wild creatures, great and small, who in their love for him had agreed to bring the materials needful, from the forest and plain and mountain, and pile them up till the structure was completed, and

the way made open for Rama, divine Incarnation, and royal prince, to go to Sita, pining in her prison-garden.

There in the canyon with shy, wild things on every hand, the disciple listens while the Swami describes how each creature brought his contribution to the bridge, and how the grain of sand, brought by the ant, when multiplied a thousand thousand times, was just as serviceable as the rocks and timbers brought by the tigers and monkeys and elephants, and other huge animals. "In this way," the Swami comments, "all things combine to help him who, like Rama, has realized his oneness with all things." Some of the smaller creatures felt discouraged because of the little they were able to bring and to do. The chipmunk was one of these, and bewailed his inability to make his offering match the love in his heart. Moreover the great creatures were guilty of making fun of his efforts, and mocked at all the small assistants. Sri Rama, however, soon made them realize that in acts of equal devotion there is no little or big, and in compassion for the chipmunk, he stroked the length of his back with his two fingers. As a result, the chipmunk bears the mark of those holy fingers in the stripes down his back to this very day.

Continuing with his narrative, the Swami embellishes the account of Hanuman, the monkey devotee, who hopped the ocean lying between Ravanna's kingdom and the shores of India and created a diversion in Rama's favor by using his tail as a torch to set the city ablaze.

Thus this epic poem, one of the few great epics of the world, sparkles and lives for those who listen, as the Swami recreates these scenes before their inner gaze. And as he talks, he is for them Rama, just as he becomes Sri Krishna when he expounds the Gita, and conveys to them the living light of Christ, when he touches on His divine life and teachings.

It grows cold, but still no one moves, as the Swami describes Hanuman's recognition of Sita and her recognition of him through Rama's ring which he bears. It is not till the twilight has almost given way to the darkness that reluctantly the little party wends its way home.

IN MEMORY OF SISTER SHANTA

It seems like a dream that Sister Shanta is no longer in our midst. The tall, active figure that moved so swiftly from one duty to another, with a gait of unlimited strength and vitality, answered the call from the World Beyond so cheerfully and readily as if her departure was of no account.

To the Vedanta Centre and Ananda Ashrama Community, of which she was an important and indispensable part, the loss has been staggering. For nearly thirty years Sister Shanta's boundless energy and tireless devotion had fed the many arteries of action that keep alive and flowing the life-stream of a group engaged in the service of an ideal. Since 1928, when she came from California Ashrama to live permanently in Boston, she was the Vedanta Centre's general manager, treasurer, bookkeeper, shopper, house mother and cook, all in one. With her able hands and even disposition, Sister took care of the need of a large city establishment, as well as two houses in Cohasset Retreat, with their endless details. She was always ready to serve in any capacity a household which was extremely dependent on her efficiency and sound judgment.

"Mary Lacy," as Sister Shanta was formerly called, came to Swami Paramananda in 1921, a young woman from Louisville, Kentucky. The Swami had accepted her as one of the members of his consecrated household, which was trained at the first Vedanta Centre of Boston at Queens-

berry Street. Her name was frequently on Swami Paramananda's lips because she rendered service in silence and made little or no demand on his time and energy. Of her the Swami said he wished he had two — a rare compliment paid scarcely to anyone. Teasingly he spoke of her as "Kentucky wonder." Once when he asked her to make a speech, she responded that her action must speak for her, as she had no gift of words.

By nature Sister Shanta was absolutely steady, always balanced and seldom disturbed. These traits inspired Swami Paramananda to give her the spiritual name "Shanta," which means "pacified" or "tranquil." In the confusion of cross-purposes of mind, sometimes inevitable when many divergent temperaments come together, Sister never lost her head. In humility she was a true disciple. Whenever rebuked by the Swami, she was found not to defend herself, but would quietly say, "I am sorry, Swamiji." Unjust or uncalled-for reprimand, which she accepted in silence, did not affect her natural cheerfulness. To her friends she was unfailingly loyal and extremely generous. She seldom criticized people nor shared in small talk. By her dependability and strength of character she gave support to all her co-workers. Utmost unselfishness was the essence of her being, and untiring work without thought of reward, her way of worship and service to God.

The few weeks she lived after she had learned that her days on earth were numbered were full of lessons for those who surrounded her. She retained her self-sufficiency and independence almost until the last, making light of her deadly illness. Her utter lack of fear and childlike faith were an inspiration to everyone. Through suffering she was growing to greater strength and marked detachment, her chief concern being not to cause anyone trouble.

Liberation came to Sister Shanta on Sunday, July 16th, without any struggle on her part. This was regarded a special dispensation of the Lord to His devotee, as the nature of her illness had indicated that it was to be otherwise. As she had accepted His decree in complete resignation, although she had wished that she might live longer in His service, so had He released her in utter peace and without pain.

Two days later nearly fifty friends joined hearts with the community in showing their respect to Sister Shanta. In the quiet of the early morning the Memorial Service was held in the Ashrama garden, predominently white with fragrant nicotiana, and under a sunny sky. The Service consisted of songs, prayers and readings from the Bhagavad-Gita and New Testament. In the evening a similar group gathered at the Chapel of the Vedanta Centre in Boston to share in the tribute paid by Gayatri Devi in speaking of the Sister who had been one of her staunchest friends and greatest support.

The void her passing has created cannot be easily filled. Her spirit will live in the hearts of those who loved and admired her dedicated and unselfish character.

REPORT

VEDANTA CENTRE, BOSTON, MASS.

The summer of 1950 has been one of change and readjustment for the Vedanta Centre. Early in June its resident community moved to Cohasset Ananda Ashrama, coming to Boston only for the Sunday Services and Tuesday evening Class. During August and September the Services (but not the Class) were suspended in the city so that they could be held in the outdoor Sanctuary of the Ashrama. Frequently the weather interfered, driving the worshippers

to the spacious living room of the Lower House. On the Fourth of July, when special Services were being conducted in memory of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Paramananda under the pines at the conclusion of a three-hour period of silence, Gayatri Devi and the assembled group were compelled to run for shelter from a heavy downpour. It was a real disappointment that all arrangements for the Hindu dinner to be served outside under the trees had to be forsaken.

The twenty-first anniversary of the Cohasset Ashrama was observed on Sunday, August 20th, in a similar manner as the above, with Services and dinner for the group. The final Service in the afternoon was shared by Mrs. Isabel Hickey, Mr. Raphael Boruchoff, Fanchon Mowers and Darrell Miya, each paying spontaneous tribute.

Unlike previous years, Labor Day did not bring to a close the season's activities. They continued into the autumn through the regular rhythm of daily Services, study and informal discussions, in which frequently out-of-state friends as well as nearby visitors participated.

Never since the establishment of the Ashrama had it been the home of so large a community as this summer. Four young members of California Ashrama came to give a helping hand at a time of real need caused by Sister Shanta's passing. It seems that this has been a period for the training of new consecrated workers who will carry on the work both in the east and the west.

At the time of the writing of the Report, Ashrama was still open, receiving guests who came for rest and spiritual refreshment. Beginning from October 1st, Sunday Services will be resumed at the Vedanta Centre in Boston, although the community intends to maintain residence at the Ashrama as long as the weather is favorable.

ANANDA ASHRAMA, LA CRESCENTA, CALIFORNIA

At the Ananda Ashrama, California, the summer season was marked by the observance of Memorial Day, on May 30; the anniversary of Swami Paramananda's final release from this earthly life, on June 21; the anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's great liberation, on July 4; and Labor Day, on September 4.

All of these days were observed either with silence and meditation by Ashrama members and friends, or by a vigil before the shrine by the resident members. The Services on the Sunday immediately following each of the Swami's special days were dedicated to the memory of that Swami, and as usual brought to the hearts of those present a sense of living presence.

There was in addition, an event of oustanding interest, more secular in its nature, yet spiritual too in the deep sense of that word; it was the concert of chamber music given by Mrs. Grimes, pianist, and her two daughters: Elena, violinist, and Alta, cellist, on the night of Monday, August 14. The setting was the Temple of the Universal Spirit — and the evening was warm and balmy.

The pure musicianship which all three artists displayed, combined with their fine feeling and technique, resulted in a performance of sheer beauty, which drew forth profound appreciation from the audience, among whom were not a few musicians of high distinction. A silver offering was taken for the benefit of Charushila Devi's Ashrama and Training School for Girls in Calcutta, India, during which Sister Vimala played upon the organ one of those selections which have given such genuine inspiration and pleasure to the congregations at the Services and the Thursday evening Classes.